

Developing a Situationist Global Justice Theory: from an architectonic to a consummatory approach

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ABSTRACT

Conventional global justice theory expresses a concern for the suffering of individuals around the world, yet very often the experience of those individuals plays little role in the work of theorising global justice. In this paper I argue that global justice has tended to take an architectonic approach in which the theorist orders the world by offering idealised principles of justice that serve as guides to necessary global reforms. This approach draws on a flawed geography of injustice, in which the world is divided into just and order regions that must save unjust and disordered regions, while also misunderstanding the causes of injustice. In place of this architectonic approach, I offer a consummatory approach that conceives of justice as a quality of social relationships and which draws on the experience of individuals suffering injustice, using the Grenfell Tower fire as an example. This consummatory approach is then further developed by outlining a situationist just theory drawing on the philosophy of John Dewey.

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JOE HOOVER

“Residents of the area call it the crematorium.
It has revealed the undercurrents of our age.
The poor who thought voting for the rich would save them.
The poor who believed all that the papers said.
The poor who listened with their fears.
The poor who live in their rooms and dream for their kids.
The poor are you and I, you in your garden of flowers,
In your house of books, who gaze from afar
At a destiny that draws near with another name.
Sometimes it takes an image to wake up a nation
From its secret shame. And here it is every name
Of someone burnt to death, on the stairs or in their room,
Who had no idea what they died for, or how they were betrayed.
They did not die when they died; their deaths happened long
Before. It happened in the minds of people who never saw
Them. It happened in the profit margins. It happened
In the laws. They died because money could be saved and made.”

(*Grenfell Tower, June, 2017* by Ben Okri)

1. “Where there is fire, there is politics.”¹

Just before 1AM on 14 June 2017, a faulty fridge-freezer caught fire in the kitchen of a flat in the Grenfell Tower in West London. The fire spread through the building despite the efforts of the fire brigade. While many residents managed to escape, at least seventy-two people died and the survivors continue to suffer as the response to their needs by authorities has been inadequate.² The fire in the tower spread quickly because of conditions in the building. Inside, the many faults and hazards ignored by the management company allowed the blaze to grow unchecked and impeded residents’ escape. Outside, the cosmetic cladding—added to appease wealthy neighbours who thought Grenfell was an “eyesore”—allowed the fire to circumvent existing protections and engulf the entire structure. While the tower was neglected and dangerous, residents were aware of the problems and had appealed to the management

¹ Faku quoted in Kerry Ryan Chance, “‘Where There Is Fire, There Is Politics’: Ungovernability and Material Life in Urban South Africa,” *Cultural Anthropology* 30, no. 3 (August 10, 2015): 394.

² Natasha Elcock, “I Escaped from the Grenfell Tower Fire – but Now We Face a New Trauma | Natasha Elcock,” *the Guardian*, December 27, 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/27/grenfell-tower-new-trauma-theresa-may-panel-inquiry-justice>.

company and the government for help long before the fire started.³ Yet, the residents—poor, often vulnerable and socially marginalised—were ignored. It is clear social housing and its residents were not a priority in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Under the guise of “austerity”, government agencies reduced oversight and funding, leaving residents vulnerable to fire and other hazards. Claiming to “redevelop” the site, the management company created the combustible conditions that fed the fire: flammable cladding, inadequate exits, incorrect safety advice, and an overcrowded site that made it difficult for fire crews to access the building.

The Grenfell Tower fire is a tragedy, which is a facile platitude. The events of that night were the culmination of a long and complex series of interactions between a number of different people and institutions. It is an injustice that dozens were killed and hundreds had their homes destroyed. However, understanding the fire as a moral wrong is challenging. The resident whose fridge-freezer malfunctioned did not intend to set the tower on fire. Neither the building’s management company nor the government wanted to burn the tower, destroy homes, or kill people. There is no evil villain or conspiracy to which we can assign blame. Yet, what happened was more than an accident; human actions led to the mistreatment of the residents of Grenfell Tower. As Ben Okri writes, “their deaths happened long before. It happened in the minds of people who never saw them. It happened in the profit margins. It happened in the laws.”⁴ To understand the Grenfell Tower fire we must see it is a wrong that is the consequence of wider and highly unequal relationships, mediated through hierarchical social practices and institutions with global scope, in particular unequal relationships of class, race, gender, and national identity.

The injustice of the Grenfell Tower fire is not unique; similar injustices occur across the globe. For example, in the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, which includes the city of Durban, in South Africa, shack fires in informal settlements have killed hundreds of people and destroyed thousands of homes.⁵ Ten years prior to the Grenfell Tower fire, on 1 November 2007, a fire broke out in the Kennedy Road settlement. The fire started in the home of Ma Khuzwayo, a 52-year-old woman living with her 12 children and grandchildren. Residents of the settlement were able to extinguish the fire before it spread, but not before it killed Ma Khuzwayo, who was unable to flee her shack because her mobility was limited as an amputee.⁶ This fire, and many like it at Kennedy Road and other settlements across South Africa, started because residents rely on gas stoves and candles for heat, cooking, and light. The lack of basic utilities makes everyday life an often-deadly affair, especial for those like Ma Khuzwayo facing multiple cross-cutting vulnerabilities and exclusions.

As the residents affected by these fires have sought to make clear, fires are not random events or natural disasters, but rather political consequences of social action and inaction, especially by authorities—from the municipal to the global levels. In the case of the shack fires in eThekweni, a variety of social forces press the poorest residents to live in informal urban settlements. These people are treated as a hazard rather than citizens deserving services, protection, and rights of participation. Residents use open flames because local authorities refuse to provide electricity to the settlements, and in fact removed electrical connections starting in 2001. Authorities are driven not only by a desire to dissuade informal settlements,

³ Grenfell Action Group, “KCTMO – Playing with Fire!,” *Grenfell Action Group* (blog), November 20, 2016, <https://grenfellactiongroup.wordpress.com/2016/11/20/kctmo-playing-with-fire/>.

⁴ “Grenfell Tower, June, 2017: A Poem by Ben Okri,” *Financial Times*, June 23, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/39022f72-5742-11e7-80b6-9bfa4c1f83d2>.

⁵ Matt Birkinshaw, “A Big Devil in the Shacks: The Politics of Fire,” *Pambazuka News*, September 17, 2008, <https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/big-devil-shacks>.

⁶ Abahlali BaseMjondolo, “The Plague of Fires Takes Another Life in Kennedy Road,” Abahlali BaseMjondolo, November 1, 2007, <http://abahlali.org/node/2822/>.

but also by a global effort to privatise public services—in London as well as Durban.⁷ When fires do occur, they are particularly devastating as shacks are built closely together and settlements densely populated, again because governments refuse to meet the shack dwellers demands for adequate land and housing. Further, lack of access for emergency services and inadequate water supplies mean extinguishing fires is often difficult or impossible. This dynamic has causes beyond local and national politics, as global patterns of urban development prioritise investment that benefits private interests rather than the public good.⁸ Yet, the injustice does not stop at neglect: the residents in informal settlements face harassment, violence, and the destruction of their homes, as authorities in eThekweni, and other municipalities, are trying to remove shack dwellers from the city to resettlement areas far from their homes and families, as well as economic and social opportunities. The increasing violence of urban policing is, again, not unique to South Africa but rather reflects a wider securitisation—and in fact militarisation—of the city.⁹

These two images of injustice, at Grenfell and Kennedy Road, different but so alike, can help us to rethink the nature of global justice. In both these cases, fire has a distinctive symbolic meaning. Fire has long represented the power of authorities, as the individuals and institutions in charge of society are imbued with a unique force that enables them to rule while also making them responsible for restraining their power and protecting the community.¹⁰ In both Durban and London we see the power of government misused, with failure physically manifested in fires that grow out of control and consume the homes and lives of those most profoundly disempowered by the social order.

Fire as a symbol of power, however, also represents the power that comes from the community itself, in particular from the marginalised and disempowered refusing their place in society, with metaphorical fire consuming old institutions. From the fires of the London Riots in 2011,¹¹ to the those set at Kennedy Road in 2005 to hold off the destruction of homes with a barricade of burning tires and mattresses,¹² the power in the flames is not only that of authority—it is also the force of those who refuse to submit to an unjust social order. Attending to the duality of fire as a political symbol draws out the first lesson to be learned from the injustices at Grenfell Tower and Kennedy Road: justice is always political. I do not mean that injustices are committed only by political figures or government institutions, though they often are. Rather, the terms in which we conventionally understand both what justice demands and which harms count as injustices reflect the experience of privileged groups that dominate social institutions and are shaped by the play of political power in society. Justice, then, in its everyday sense, reflects the existing arrangement of society, with its attendant inequalities of power and privilege. There is, of course, another understanding of justice as a critical claim against conventional standards, but this normative understanding is still situated within politics, as critical justice-claims reflect particular social positions.¹³ This situatedness is often a cause of concern, with many theorists of justice struggling to expunge partiality from the principles

⁷ Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neo-Liberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), chap. 4.

⁸ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2013), chap. 2.

⁹ Stephen Graham, *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London: Verso, 2010).

¹⁰ Charteris-Black (2016) and Chance (2015)

¹¹ Meera Sabaratnam and Joe Hoover, “Reading Violence: What’s Political about the London Riots(?),” *The Disorder Of Things* (blog), August 9, 2011, <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2011/08/09/reading-violence-whats-political/>.

¹² Nigel C Gibson, “Zabalaza, Unfinished Struggles against Apartheid: The Shackdwellers’ Movement in Durban,” *Socialism and Democracy* 21, no. 3 (2007): 60–96.

¹³ Michael Goodhart, *Injustice: Political Theory for the Real World* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), chaps. 1 & 2. Goodhart demonstrates the tendency of conventional justice theory to obscure the politics at stake.

they offer. My contention is that this situatedness cannot and should not be denied. Instead, I argue we should acknowledge the political quality of the demands made in the name of justice in order to ensure our theories of global justice attend to their own political commitments and perspectives. As justice seeks to realise particular moral ends it will always entail a transformation of the social order and the redistribution of political power.

Fire has a second symbolic meaning at both Grenfell Tower and Kennedy Road, as it draws out the processual character of injustice; like fire, injustice is not a discrete act or event, it is a relationship between elements that leads to a reaction. Injustices are the consequences of actions taken within wider social arrangements, which means that even decisions that are not intentionally unjust or harmful can lead to injustice because individuals are connected through increasingly complex and wide-ranging social practices—Iris Marion Young called this a social connection model.¹⁴ Thus, the second lesson we can learn from these terrible fires is that injustice is a consequence of ongoing and complex social connections, therefore justice must aspire to a rearrangement of our social connections, which is a work that is always responsive, ongoing, and contingent. Justice is a quality of lived and shared experiences rather than a harmonious order to be constructed or an end state to be reached.

How, then, do these specific examples and proposed lessons change global justice theory? My contention is that they reveal the limits of contemporary global justice theory, which tends to obscure the power relations that shape such theorising and misrepresents the injustices it seeks to remedy. Further, it misconstrues what the pursuit of justice entails by thinking of justice as a depoliticised end-state or ideal arrangement of the social world. The fires in London and Durban require us to think about global justice as a quality of the active and lived relationships between people. I develop an alternative approach to justice in what follows by distinguishing between *architectonic* and *consummatory* approaches. The architectonic approach conceptualises justice as being concerned with justifying principles that order individual and institutional actors, offering a blueprint for the social world. By contrast, a consummatory approach frames justice as an emergent quality of social relationships, and for this reason is concerned with the distribution of power within social relationships, as well as in the institutions and practices that structure those relationships. A consummatory approach entails both an *affirmation* of the lived experience of those suffering injustice, as well as a *critique* of the power-relationships through which those experiences are constructed.¹⁵ In the end, I offer an initial outline of how this consummatory approach might be developed into a *situationist* global justice theory.¹⁶

2. Architectonic Visions of Justice

Since Plato's *Republic*, ideas about justice have been expressed through metaphors of sight and vision.¹⁷ In his famous myth of the cave, Plato suggests that the insight needed to understand justice requires removing oneself from everyday experience and striving to see the true nature of the world, accessible only to those with the proper capacities and training. While Plato's elitism offends contemporary egalitarian sensibilities, the basic problem he addresses remain familiar: we need some way of knowing if the social rules we follow are truly good,

¹⁴ Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23, no. 1 (2006): 102–30.

¹⁵ See further, Pol Bargañés-Pedreny & Peter Finkenbusch, "From Critique to Affirmation in International Relations," *Global Society*, 33, no. 1 (2019).

¹⁶ For an approach to such questions that is situationist in different but resonate terms, see Doerthe Rosenow, "Decolonising the decolonisers? Or why we should strive for not knowing in the GMO controversy," *Global Society*, 33, no. 1 (2019).

¹⁷ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee, 3rd edition (London: Penguin Classics, 2007).

and who can be trusted with the power to determine those rules. Few today would be inclined to appoint philosopher kings, but justice theorising often remains wedded to Plato's framing. The theorist of justice is presented as an impartial observer, able to identify injustices invisible to others, and, because of their impartial perspective, especially able to suggest principles of justice. Determining the principles that should guide society requires the exercise of judgment, therefore, the conventional mode of justice theorising is stubbornly architectonic, as the theorist is presumed to possess a privileged form of insight and to be capable of a unique impartiality. Their impartial perspective enables the justice theorist to order the social world properly, as an architect designs a building.

In conventional approaches the global justice theorist purports to show us something of our world we have failed to see: hidden, or at least unacknowledged, injustices. Further, by offering principles of global justice, the theorist, like Plato, orders the world according to impartial moral standards imbued with transcendent authority.¹⁸ Kimberly Hutchings shows how the theorist's privileged capacity of judgment is justified, first, by her timeliness, as she is located at the forefront of a global and distinctly modern progressive temporality, such that those who deny the authority of the universal and impartial principles that the theorist articulates, are conceptually exiled to an irrational past.¹⁹ Second, the theorist's judgments are rendered with a certainty that denies the possibility of vulnerability, for the theorist or her judgment.²⁰ In what follows, I highlight how this architectonic approach moralises the politics of its own prescriptions, obscuring the power relationships at play while also misconstruing the nature of global injustices in such a way that the prescriptions offered are inadequate. Importantly, I am not claiming that individuals who theorise about global justice are choosing to take on this perspective, but rather that the architectonic approach frames and limits global justice theory, from early work in the 1970s to today.

Peter Singer's influential 1972 article "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" presents one of the clearest examples of the architectonic approach.²¹ Singer begins with what he calls the "essential facts" of the humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh in 1971, describing it as a situation in which 9 million refugees faced death due to a lack of food, shelter, and medical care. The crisis, he claims, was avoidable and caused by a combination of persistent poverty, natural disaster, and civil war.²² This description will likely seem inadequate to anyone with a passing knowledge of the 1971 war in what was then East Pakistan, as Pakistani forces targeted Bengali nationalists, committing genocidal violence, and sparked a civil war, in which India intervened due to the enormous human suffering that followed.²³ Singer, however, is clear that the details of the case are not important to his central concern, which is the inadequacy of the response by people in "affluent countries" to profound human suffering happening in far-away places.²⁴ The suffering of Bengalis in 1971 is only an illustrative example of a general problem. Singer's central goal is to alter the moral thinking, and therefore the practical actions, of people in affluent countries by showing them their unacknowledged responsibilities to relieve human suffering. It is because Singer is interested in providing a general ordering of the world that he

¹⁸ Kimberly Hutchings, "Thinking Ethically about the Global in 'Global Ethics,'" *Journal of Global Ethics* 10, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 26–29.

¹⁹ Kimberly Hutchings, "What Is Orientation in Thinking? On the Question of Time and Timeliness in Cosmopolitical Thought," *Constellations* 18, no. 2 (2011): 190–204.

²⁰ Kimberly Hutchings, "A Place of Greater Safety? Securing Judgment in International Ethics," in *The Vulnerable Subject: Beyond Rationalism in International Relations*, ed. Amanda Russell Beattie and Kate Schick (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 25–42.

²¹ Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1972): 229–43.

²² Singer, 229–30.

²³ David Bergman, "The Politics of Bangladesh's Genocide Debate," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2016, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/06/opinion/the-politics-of-bangladeshs-genocide-debate.html>.

²⁴ Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," 230–33.

is able to move from pressing political events in Bangladesh to a hypothetical drowning child by way of a scarcely acknowledged analogy. In order to show that the distance that separates individuals in affluent countries from the people suffering in Bangladesh is morally irrelevant, he asks his reader to imagine a child drowning in a shallow pond, and then to reflect on their obligation to save the child, given the small cost to themselves. He then argues the obligation to alleviate or prevent suffering is not altered by the greater distance between his reader and those suffering in Bangladesh. The implication of this argument is that his readers' moral relationship to the refugees in Bangladesh is the same as their relationship to the child they imagine drowning, and, thus, individuals in affluent countries ought to act for the same reasons.

Singer invites us to imagine global injustice as a matter of persistent suffering, in particular of those who are weak, which the powerful have an obligation to alleviate. His stark rendering of global injustice allows us to identify the problematic political relationships such a framing of injustice presumes. First, the suffering of the weak is unrelated to the capacities of the strong, who are able to alleviate their suffering. Therefore, the task of justice is to motivate action, rather than reforming the interactions between the weak and the powerful or considering the underlying social structures that produce weak and powerful people. Second, the powerful are called upon to respond to global injustice as a matter of conscience, not as a result of any particular complicity in the suffering of distant others. The moral relationship between the weak and the powerful is a universal relationship defined by duty, in which the powerful must save the weak. Viewing injustice in this manner removes questions about the type of relationship between individuals. How and why the affluent have such wealth and power, or how those suffering came to suffer, is not particularly important and no consideration is given to how we might avoid the reproduction of political hierarchies in our moral theory. To put perhaps too fine a point on it: the Bengalis killed, raped, injured, starved, and displaced in the war in 1971 were not imagined children drowning in a pond. They were real persons caught up in dramatic political events and positioned within global social structures that increased their vulnerability to harms; they had their own strategies for survival, thoughts on the injustice of their situation, and were still able to speak and act on their own behalf. Their agency, obscured in Singer's framing, does not mean they were not in need of assistance, but it should give us pause before thinking of them as anonymous and helpless people in need of saving by the citizens of affluent countries.

The politics of dependency inherent in the architectonic approach, while particularly clear in Singer's work, is seen in much of the global justice literature.²⁵ There is profound suffering of great numbers of abject individuals somewhere "out there", whom people in the secure, stable, and wealthy world, "here" at home, must be motivated to address. On this framing, injustices arise in the disordered, dangerous, and poor world outside "our" experience. Singer's argument so clearly reveals the politics of dependency in conventional approaches to global justice because he simplifies the world so profoundly. Less simplistic accounts of global justice render the politics of dependence in more subtle hues, yet I argue the architectonic approach persists.

In 1975, Charles Beitz expanded John Rawls' theory of justice to include questions of global justice.²⁶ Like Singer, Beitz frames global justice in terms of what those in wealthy

²⁵ Charles Beitz, "Justice and International Relations," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 4, no. 4 (1975): 374–77; Allen Buchanan, *Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-Determination: Moral Foundations for International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 14, 443–44; Martha Nussbaum, "Beyond the Social Contract: Capabilities and Global Justice," *Oxford Development Studies* 32, no. 1 (2004): 3–4; Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 2–5, 103–6.

²⁶ Beitz, "Justice and International Relations"; See also Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton University Press, 1999).

states owe those in poor states, but he criticises Singer's failure to distinguish between moral duties that are a matter of humanity and those that are a matter of justice.²⁷ For Beitz, the demands of justice are determined by the way in which citizens create legitimate state institutions. Justice requires that the basic structure of society ensures equality between individuals. Therefore, the question of justice goes beyond whether individuals are moved by the suffering of other individuals, and instead addresses the rightfulness of the institutional order they create and in which they participate. The terms of justice are set through an idealised moral contract between citizens, securing protections and mutual advantage within the nation-state. Global justice, then, is only a concern if the ideal state is not self-sufficient and autonomous. Beitz argues the nation-state is not self-sufficient and, therefore, we must also consider what obligations of justice exist between states as the international order affects the rights and life chances of individuals.

Beitz appeals to the changed conditions of a globalising world to motivate reform of the international order, which he argues is unjustly committed to the supremacy of state sovereignty. He argues that the interdependence of nation-states has reached a level of intensity that requires a rewriting of the social contract to include relations between nation-states. The nation-state alone cannot protect the rights of individuals or ensure mutual prosperity because (a) of its tendency to appeal to sovereignty as a justification for the abuses committed against citizens; (b) the inability of nation-states to determine their own economic destinies, especially given the unequal distribution of natural resources and advantages; and (c) the way the international orders fails to help poor countries and instead ends up harming them, as international institutions serve and magnify the self-interest of powerful states at the expense of weaker ones. Beitz's idealised contractual framing renders global injustices as either the result of faulty nation-states (in which improperly constituted social contracts lead to injustice) or an improper ordering of the international sphere (such that the international order allows for exploitative behaviour by powerful states and international institutions). Global justice then demands that sovereignty is conditional upon the protection of international human rights and the global redistribution of wealth. Both of these demands require powerful and wealthy nations to act more justly, which depends upon changing the international order so that the self-interests of powerful states are not pulled in competing directions.

Beitz's account of global justice is less stark than Singer's, but it is still shaped by a politics of dependence. The general understanding of injustice common to the architectonic approach is premised on the separation of geographic spaces of justice and injustice—a "here" that is just and a "there" that is unjust. The unjust spaces out "there" in the world are defined by the failure of political and economic institutions. Whether the injustices of concern are rights violations or profound poverty, the core problem is that these unjust spaces are not able to properly order themselves. The disordered spaces of the globe suffer governments that are abusive, incompetent, or corrupt, as well as poor economies that suffer ineffective institutions and laws, lack resources, and face exposure to natural disasters. Understanding the problem in this way structures the debate that follows, as the central concern is to demonstrate why and how individuals living in the orderly spaces of the world should go about fixing the disorderly spaces, to save those unfortunate individuals suffering from global disorder. While Singer presents this politics of dependence in highly simplified terms—poor people are suffering and rich people have a duty to help—the architectonic approach does not preclude the possibility of finding institutions in the ordered world complicit in injustice in disordered spaces. Beitz attempts to show that global poverty has its causes in the harms the powerful commit against the weak by venerating the principle of state sovereignty. Yet, these attempts to think in terms of complicity render that complicity as an aberration within ordered spaces, a moral failure to

²⁷ Beitz, "Justice and International Relations," 360–62.

be corrected by properly extending the social contract. Extending the social contract globally is meant to clarify the obligations of justice that exist beyond the nation-state and limit the institutional expression of state-interests that are contrary to the demands of justice.

This flawed geography of injustice limits the political imagination of most global justice theorising to a statist one, as the ideal form of political order looks like a stable, liberal state, presumably filled with affluent citizens, even if that state needs integration into a more global institutional order.²⁸ While earlier debates highlighted a division between cosmopolitan and statist approaches,²⁹ as the global justice literature has developed it is clear that cosmopolitan reforms primarily serve to expand the political order captured by the idea of the good liberal nation-state.³⁰ This can be seen in recent literature in which disagreements over the exact obligations of global justice that states have focuses on narrow differences over whether the legitimacy of the modern state is best perfected by formalising norms of assistance or working towards more encompassing cosmopolitan institutions.³¹ The idealisation of the liberal nation-state hinders our understanding of the institutional conditions of injustice, as the focus is on which institutions are proper to the ordering of the world rather than the nature of social relationships and the distribution of power within and across geographic spaces. The tendency to work towards ideal political orders leaves us with seemingly irresolvable problems, as the self-sufficient nation-state is a myth now (if it ever was a reality) and the various proposed cosmopolitan orders seem caught between an unlikely (and probably undesirable) world state, and an ineffective (if more likely) reform of the existing international system. In either case the terrain for justice theorising seems to be a non-place, a utopian political geography seeking a return to the lost world of the sovereign nation-state or setting out in search of an as yet unseen global polity.³²

Following on from the flawed geography of injustice and idealisation of the good liberal nation-state, the architectonic approach leads us to misunderstand the causes of global injustice. First, by understanding injustice as the breakdown of an idealised order, the architectonic approach uncritically presumes order itself is a condition of justice. In Beitz's work this presumption goes further, as a just order is one that has the character of a contract individuals freely and rationally agree to in order to further their interests. This makes it impossible to see the way social orders that produce abuse, poverty, inequality, and other injustices are often

²⁸ The retreat to an ideal and ordered world is indicative of a latent nihilism in much justice theory. See further, Gideon Baker, "Critique, Use and World in Giorgio Agamben's Genealogy of Government," *Global Society*, 33, no. 1 (2019).

²⁹ Charles Jones, *Global Justice: Defending Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Thomas Nagel, "The Problem of Global Justice," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33, no. 2 (2005): 113–147; Richard Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁰ Jürgen Habermas, "The Constitutionalization of International Law and the Legitimation Problems of a Constitution for World Society," *Constellations* 15, no. 4 (2008): 444–455; P. Lawler, "The Good State: In Praise of 'Classical' Internationalism," *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 03 (2005): 427–449; John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

³¹ Saladin Meckled-Garcia, "On the Very Idea of Cosmopolitan Justice: Constructivism and International Agency," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 16, no. 3 (2008): 245–71; Andrea Sangiovanni, "Justice and the Priority of Politics to Morality," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (2008): 137–64; Luke Ulaş, "Doing Things by Halves: On Intermediary Global Institutional Proposals," *Ethics & Global Politics* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 30223; Laura Valentini, *Justice in a Globalized World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Lea Ypi, *Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency* (OUP Oxford, 2012).

³² This utopian non-place can be seen in Rawls' use of the fictional state of Kazanistan as an example of a decent hierarchical people that must be tolerated by liberal states; more recently, Laura Valentini dramatises the question of global justice by considering two imagined island states, Brightland and Gloomyland, to show that some obligations of global justice do exist. Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*; Valentini, *Justice in a Globalized World*.

working as expected.³³ The architectonic approach fails to engage with the social construction of injustice as it cannot see how social orders actively produce individuals that are encouraged to take advantage of inequality, especially when that exploitation is carried out within formal rules of legal reciprocity. Disorder in some spaces is the precondition of order in others. The latent colonial attitude of the architectonic approach is especially clear here, as it precludes the possibility that suffering is the intended product of an international order built on a previous imperial order, which would make the division of the world into distinctly just and unjust spaces untenable.

Second, the conventional account of global injustice considers the state's tendency to pursue its irrational and immoral self-interest, as the central problem—because it either leads individuals to an unjust partiality or the state itself commits unjust actions. Therefore, justice requires institutional reforms that can ensure the rational and moral behaviour of states within an order that makes their obligations to other states clear. There are, however, considerable reasons to doubt that nation-states are moral actors that can recognise or act upon their rational moral duties in the manner required.³⁴ In addition, the architectonic approach obscures how the structure of the state and international order itself is the cause of injustices. For example, the exclusivity of membership in the nation-state leaves millions suffering in unsafe places around the globe, and the extension of production processes globally enables the exploitation of workers and natural resources in poor countries. Even where Beitz, for example, addresses the problems with the international order, his solution is to redistribute resources and wealth from wealthy states to poor states through international institutions that more effectively curtail state-interest, rather than addressing the deeper problems, such as the fundamentally arbitrary nature of national distinctions between members and non-members, or the unequal distribution of the benefits of global production and trade.

Lest we think these short comings are a result of the time-period in which Singer and Beitz were first writing, or their broadly-liberal approach, there is a striking persistence of the architectonic approach, which can be seen in the more recent work of Rainer Forst and Nancy Fraser. Initially, Forst's theorisation of justice seems to promise an alternative, as he argues justice is fundamentally concerned with relationships between human beings, and especially with preventing domination.³⁵ The first question of justice then becomes the justifiability of the distribution of power in social relationships, as well as the degree to which social structures uphold the right to justification, which is the right to be recognised as a subject owed, and able to offer, reasonable justifications. Forst, then, sets out to provide an overarching standard to guide political deliberations and institutional arrangements, rather than a universal principle, meaning that the specific principles, norms, and laws of a just society will vary depending on their unique conditions. Thus, global justice becomes a matter of emancipating individuals from domination, whether interpersonal or institutional. For Forst, global justice requires the remaking of human rights as demands for the recognition of every individual as an active subject in political and social life,³⁶ which in turn necessitates domestic and international institutions that ensure a right to democratic participation sufficient for individuals to have a say in the distribution of wealth and resources.

³³ Carole Pateman and Charles Mills, *The Contract and Domination* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2007).

³⁴ Toni Erskine, ed., *Can Institutions Have Responsibilities? Collective Moral Agency and International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

³⁵ Rainer Forst, *Justification and Critique: Towards a Critical Theory of Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 24; Also see Rainer Forst, *The Right to Justification: Elements of a Constructivist Theory of Justice* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012).

³⁶ Forst, *Justification and Critique: Towards a Critical Theory of Politics*, 38–70.

Forst's relational theory of justice rejects the politics of dependence. Further, his understanding of justice as requiring a basic social structure that empowers each individual to demand, and consent to, reciprocal and general justifications goes beyond the limited contractarian account in Beitz. Yet, Forst's rejection of the architectonic approach is incomplete as he remains committed to the utopian ideal of providing "a blueprint of a fully justified basic structure."³⁷ Such an ideal aims at eliminating domination, which Seyla Benhabib argues fails to account for the stubborn resistance of the social world to such a rational arrangement, while also delimiting the possibilities of what new forms and ideals of justice may yet be realised.³⁸ Forst claims the political process of realising a transparent and fully justified basic structure accommodates diversity, but the ideal toward which those many different routes progress is one of completeness and closure.

Forst is unapologetic about his utopianism and defends it by suggesting that there is a double normativity in utopian thinking, as we both imagine an ideal world free from domination while retaining a general scepticism toward such plans.³⁹ The idea is that we leave room for the novel and unexpected in human interactions, while aspiring to a fully justified basic structure. Forst's faith in the power of scepticism to temper the excesses of utopianism, however, is undermined in his own reflections on global justice in *The Right to Justification*. Forst asks his readers to imagine themselves as a poor miner working under exploitative conditions in a mine somewhere in the world, presumably in the global south.⁴⁰ The reader, imagining themselves as the miner, is invited to appear before an equally imaginary Global Court of Distributive Justice to make her case for what justice should be for poor exploited miners. The miner is given a choice of different attorneys, each representing a competing justice theory. In the end, the miner rejects all the attorneys in favour of a conception of justice that demands her inclusion as a subject of justification. Aside from simply reaffirming Forst's own theory, this imagined trial has further limitations. As John McGuire argues, Forst's idealised encounter shows the thinness of his commitment to grounding justice in social and political reality, as the experiences of actually-existing exploited miners are ignored, as are their thoughts about the injustice of their situation and the philosophical traditions they might actually draw upon.⁴¹ Instead, engagement with the experience of injustice is limited to the miner's imagined internal dialogue in response to the various Western traditions embodied by the lawyers. It is telling that this is unimportant to Forst, as the scene reveals that while the miner may have something to learn from Forst, it appears Forst has nothing to learn from exploited miners. This myopia reconfirms Benhabib's worry that Forst's account of justice is more Platonic than he realises, as justice at his imagined court confirms the authority of his abstract vision rather than expanding our horizons. This reveals the first persistent seduction of the architectonic approach, it invites us to retain the privileged position of the theorist—as an educator who enables others to see the radiant vision of justice. Within Forst's theory the role of architect is open to all, but it seems the principles of the architect's craft are rather less open to fundamental revision.

The privileges afforded the theorist directly contribute to a further problem with Forst's account of global justice, as he maintains the problematic rendering of the geography of injustice. Forst seeks to consider the global context of injustice in a critical way, by looking at multiple forms of domination, and in doing so expands upon limited liberal approaches. Yet,

³⁷ Seyla Benhabib, "The Uses and Abuses of Kantian Rigorism. On Rainer Forst's Moral and Political Philosophy," *Political Theory* 43, no. 6 (2015): 789.

³⁸ Benhabib, 789.

³⁹ Forst, *Justification and Critique: Towards a Critical Theory of Politics*, 177–90.

⁴⁰ Forst, *The Right to Justification*, 241–50.

⁴¹ John McGuire, "Two Rawls Don't Make a Right: On Rainer Forst and the New Normativity," *Constellations* 23, no. 1 (2016): 110–21.

the person he imagines to be dominated by the global system is a poor person in a poor country dominated by rich countries, subject to failing or illegitimate government at the national level and to undemocratic and often exploitative governance at the global level. Forst appeals to changed conditions that expose individuals to a variety of harmful global forces and is critical of the failings of state governments, yet the context of injustice remains idealised rather than concrete, such that the principles of justice intended to reform society remain separated from specific injustices. The primary context of justice and normal space for political engagement is presumed to be the nation-state, therefore questions of justice are addressed first through participation in the bounded community of citizens. The global sphere is recognised as a context with consequences that effect individuals and contribute to injustices, hence the need for global justice norms, but the primary space in which justice is pursued remains the sovereign nation-state. Global injustice, however, is not so neat, and those suffering injustices as part of the global system are not only the poor and the poorly governed trapped in poor states, but in fact all of us effected by the declining democratic responsiveness of national governments, the increasing power of non-state authorities (particularly multinational corporations), and economic processes that are increasing inequality globally. Forst retains key aspects of the architectonic approach and thus struggles to understand global injustice, much less reimagine global justice, beyond the old tension between statist and cosmopolitan orders.⁴² We are left wondering how to understand the geography of global injustice and how to imagine a more just world without relying on idealised political orders. This reveals the second persistent seduction of the architectonic approach, it is easier to remain in the framing of national and cosmopolitan ideals than to think the geography of injustice differently.

To explore this second issue more fully we can turn to Nancy Fraser's work, in which she argues that the way we draw the boundaries that define the scope of justice is itself a subject of justice.⁴³ Similar to Forst, Fraser's account appeals to an underlying normative principle, for her it is participatory parity. This principle protects the moral equality of individuals by guaranteeing their political status and participation in decision making. Participatory parity is then applied in three different dimensions of justice, the distributive and redistributive dimensions are the focus of Fraser's well-known early-writing,⁴⁴ but in *Frames of Justice* she is primarily concerned with the third-dimension of justice, which is representation. All the dimensions of justice should be regulated by the norm of participatory parity but representation is of special importance in times of what she terms "abnormal justice."⁴⁵ The special importance of the representative dimension arises because there are two different kinds of representational injustice: misrepresentation, which is a normal injustice occurring when the norms of representation within existing institutions fail, and misframing, an abnormal injustice arising when the boundaries drawn around our discussions and decisions about what justice requires are themselves in question. Misframing, then, is the core global injustice, as the changes wrought by globalisation have thrown the conventional Westphalian-Keynesian

⁴² This reflects the wider tendency in the global justice literature noted above. Some, like Benhabib try to resolve the tension through cosmopolitan orders that attend to the diversity of responses to global injustices, see Seyla Benhabib et al., *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford University Press, 2006). Others, such as Walker have focused on exploring the roots of our difficulty in understanding and overcoming our current condition R. B. J. Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World* (London: Routledge, 2010). There is an emerging consensus on the difficulty, but also the importance, of overcoming this framing. See, Miriam Ronzoni, "Justice, Injustice, and Critical Potential Beyond Borders: A Multi-Dimensional Affair," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 35, no. 1 (2018): 90–111.

⁴³ Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).

⁴⁴ Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).

⁴⁵ Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 48–75.

framing into misalignment with social reality. Global justice, therefore, must first address the “who” of justice and the “how” of our determination of the “who”. As Paul Muldoon draws out, for Fraser

the global poor can legitimately claim to be victims of a global economic system that distributes resources inequitably and a global status order that denies recognition to all but a select few. These economic and cultural injustices are, however, compounded by the fact that the global poor are denied the opportunity to challenge the social arrangements that prevent them from participating as peers in social life.⁴⁶

Like Forst, Fraser thinks that justice requires more than the redistribution of wealth or the securing basic rights, but she goes further, suggesting the Westphalian-Keynesian order that frames conventional accounts of justice needs to be rethought.

Having opened up the question of how political community is formed, Fraser then considers the meta-question of how we decide the proper boundaries of membership and forms of democratic procedure. At this point, Fraser relies upon the principle of participatory parity, suggesting that all those who are subjected⁴⁷ to a regime of governance have the right to be involved in the democratic deliberation over the proper boundaries determining inclusion and exclusion within political community. The democratic determination of the proper frame of justice will be achieved by subjecting the informal discussion of such matters in global civil society to a formal institutional procedure that can give determinate shape to a new geography of justice. In the end, she does not give us a blueprint to what this new geography of justice will look like, though she suggests it should be self-correcting (avoiding the oscillation between “normal” and “abnormal” justice)⁴⁸ and will require new transnational democratic power, which new institutions of global public opinion will hold accountable.⁴⁹ Fraser more fully challenges the privilege of the theorist and also directly considers how we might reimagine the geography of injustice, thus surpassing Forst’s account. Yet, the seductions of the architectonic approach remain.

As Muldoon argues, the principle of participatory parity not only acts as a philosophical backstop that puts limits on how far actual democratic deliberation would be allowed to reframe questions of justice, it also presupposes the equality of individuals that grounds her wider project.⁵⁰ Fraser is aware of the circularity to a degree, but Muldoon’s point cuts deeper, as he suggests that in presuming individual equality Fraser does not take adequate measure of how such equality is actually achieved. Drawing on Arendt, Muldoon argues political equality is the achievement rather than the grounding of democratic politics.⁵¹ Fraser maintains the visionary perspective of the architect but rejects the architect’s method of building from a blueprint. For this reason, not only is Fraser’s theoretical edifice unstable but it limits her sense of what democratic community requires, as she seems to suggest that further discussion through participatory institutions will lead to better arguments for reframing justice that will *somehow* enable us to confront the injustices of globalisation. What is missing is a consideration of how the power requisite to this programme for political change is actually built, especially

⁴⁶ Paul Muldoon, “The Injustice of Territoriality,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 15, no. 5 (2012): 636.

⁴⁷ Fraser embraces an “all subjected” rather than “all effected” principles for both logical and practical reasons, Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 64–67.

⁴⁸ Fraser, 72–73.

⁴⁹ Fraser, 99.

⁵⁰ Muldoon, “The Injustice of Territoriality,” 641.

⁵¹ Muldoon, 639.

transnationally, given the global disparity of organisational resources, institutional infrastructure, and material wealth. Those holding power are likely to oppose a radical expansion of democratic power and the redrawing of political borders. Fraser has not entirely freed herself from the trappings of the architectonic approach, as she is trying to secure the just arrangement of already equal and democratic individuals by altering the boundaries of a world that is already a global political community. Fraser remains committed to a latent cosmopolitan ideal that does not fully predetermine the geography of injustice but does constrain our political imagination, such that her proposed reforms remain inadequate to the challenge presented by the inequalities of neoliberal globalisation.

Fraser refuses to relinquish the architectonic urge to order the world, the sense that justice is realised through a perfected design of human life that the unruly world of actual experience can be made to resemble with sufficient insight and dedication. As Jodi Dean draws out, Fraser is concerned with how to deal with the incommensurability of justice claims brought on by the loss of the Westphalian-Keynesian frame, “confronting the specter of incommensurability entails articulating a unified, three-dimensional theory of justice, as if unity were necessary.”⁵² Like Forst, Fraser’s critical democratic method is limited in its critical and democratic character, as the link that they attempt to make to concrete contexts of injustice is mediated by the architectonic approach in which the universal, general, and egalitarian principles remain the privileged possession of the theorist, who in the end actually determines the substance of global justice. Given the limitation identified here, the task in the final section is to set out an alternative consummatory approach to global justice. In addition, a more specific *situationist* justice theory will be outlined.

3. “From that place of darkness to a place of light.”⁵³

Plato’s allegory of the cave suggests the meaning of justice is found as we emerge from the darkness of everyday experience into the light of rational truth. In contrast, Edward Daffarn, a resident of Grenfell Tower, speaks of justice as the movement from darkness to light through political action that alters the conditions that create injustices. This contrast sums up the difference between the architectonic and the consummatory approaches. Seeking justice is not about discovering a rational model of society but rather altering relationships that have become destructive to those caught up in them. To return to fire as a political metaphor, first as authority, we see that injustice arises not because we lack the knowledge of how to order the world but because power relationships become harmful and exploitative—the fire of authority burns those it is meant to serve. The architectonic approach is not blind to concrete harms, but it seeks to remedy them by imagining a world in which those harms do not exist. A consummatory approach appreciates that human beings will always be entangled in social relationships, which will leave them vulnerable to being harmed and harming others. For this reason, at its core, the consummatory approach understands justice as the outcome of political struggles to alter social relationships that cause harm. Fire can also be the catalyst for change; in Daffarn’s words, “we need those lost lives to act as a catalyst for change” as we “move from that place of darkness to a place of light”.⁵⁴ Justice, then, is concerned with identifying the conditions that give rise to destructive relationships and developing strategies for creating and maintaining the best possible relationships, as fire prevention is about controlling and managing fire rather than simply eradicating it. In what follows, I will develop these ideas in

⁵² Jodi Dean, “Book Review, Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World, by Nancy Fraser,” *Political Theory* 38, no. 2 (2010): 301.

⁵³ From Edward Daffarn’s speech in Grenfell Speaks, *My Grenfell Year: Reflections From The Community*, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&reload=9&v=quVdh5qZKBs>.

⁵⁴ Grenfell Speaks.

two moves: first, by elaborating the consummatory approach through an engagement with the consequences of the Grenfell Tower fire, and, second, by outlining how the consummatory approach can be developed into a *situationist* global justice theory, drawing on the philosophy of John Dewey.

Considering global justice in light of Grenfell Tower fire draws out the processual nature of injustice while also highlighting how a consummatory approach complicates justice theorising. Social relationships are increasing impersonal and institutionally mediated, allowing them to stretch across time and space. In turn, this means that the geography of injustice is neither linear nor territorially bound. This added complexity, however, makes for a more empirically adequate approach to justice. The surviving residents of Grenfell, and the wider community affected by the tragedy, demonstrate this processual nature of injustice in their understanding of what happened to them. Neglect by the tenant management organisation and disregard by the council are clearly identified as immediate causes of the unsafe conditions that allowed the fire to spread with deadly effect.⁵⁵ In turn, these actions, and inactions, are understood as the practical expression of a process of managed neglect functional to wider processes of redevelopment and gentrification pursued at local, national, and global levels—many residents claim these processes are more accurately identified as displacement or ethnic cleansing.⁵⁶ The process of gentrification and the policy of managed neglect are in turn understood as rooted in a wider neoliberal ideology directing global capitalism in particularly harmful and destructive ways through dominant political ideas and institutions. Further, the specific experience of the victims is understood to result from the interaction of this assemblage of forces with cross-cutting structures of oppression, namely class, race, national identity, and gender, providing a comprehensive understanding of how and why the fire happened, as well as why the socially marginalised residents of Grenfell Tower were particularly vulnerable. A consummatory approach helps us to understand what happened at Grenfell Tower, but at the same time the experience of those in the tower, and their understanding of what happened, informs and develops the consummatory approach in turn. Understanding the Grenfell Tower fire as a global injustice helps us to see that global justice ought to be concerned not only with the overt actions of individual and institutional actors, but with the practices and institutions that constrain and mediate those actions, as well as the wider ideologies and social structures that shape practices and institutions. Even this cursory examination of the experience of those affected by the fire reveals the limitations of conventional global justice theory adopting an architectonic approach.

Along with expanding and complicating the social relationships that the consummatory approach must be concerned with, the response of those affected by the fire also assists in rethinking the politics of justice and the geography of injustice. First, placing the fire in the context of contemporary urban development and neoliberal global capitalism already undermines the politics of dependency that characterised the architectonic approach, in which the wealthy and powerful must be motivated to save the poor and weak. The Grenfell Tower fire helps us to see that global injustice do not just happen, they are not accidents, nor do they only arise because of dysfunctional political orders, rather they emerge out of oppressive relationships, in which individuals are physically attacked and exposed to structural violence, exploited, marginalised, disempowered, or devalued.⁵⁷ Further, these oppressive relationships

⁵⁵ This is most clearly seen in the extensive documentation of failures at Grenfell Tower and in the surrounding area by the Grenfell Action Group, see “Grenfell Action Group,” Grenfell Action Group, accessed September 4, 2018, <https://grenfellactiongroup.wordpress.com/>.

⁵⁶ redfish, *Failed By The State: The Struggle in the Shadow of Grenfell (Part 1)*, accessed September 4, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tFPCUgjbFA>.

⁵⁷ Here I am borrowing from Young’s “five faces of oppression.” Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2011), chap. 2.

are functional to the prevailing political order, as they create social hierarchies that justify and preserve privileges for the powerful. Yet, because oppression is more than overt acts of harm, this also means that relationships can be oppressive without that being the express intention of the actors involved. At Grenfell Tower this played out with tragic consequences. At a very basic level, the fire was as destructive as it was because the building had been covered in inappropriate cladding, which proved dangerous when it was used incorrectly. The cheaper cladding was used because the safety and well-being of the residents of the tower was not valued by the tenant management organisation or the council, as the key concern was to appease wealthy neighbours who thought the tower was unattractive. The actors and institutions at work here were not intentionally seeking to oppress the residents, even as their actions and inactions clearly led to what one Grenfell survivor describes as “social murder”.⁵⁸ Injustice that arise from the operation of oppressive social structures are obscured if we understand justice through a politics of dependence. As Young draws out in her social-connection model of responsibility, such injustices require a politics of resistance and struggle.⁵⁹

A consummatory approach sees justice as a struggle, which is reflected in the way those effected by the Grenfell fire understand their pursuit of justice and connect it to wider and older struggles against oppression.⁶⁰ While assigning guilt and punishment is important for those individuals guilty of criminal acts, it is only one part of what justice requires. Justice as political struggle is fundamentally concerned with altering relationships, both immediate and those that are impersonal and institutionally mediated. We see both of these efforts in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. First, there has been an affirmation of community and an effort to empower that community, which involves caring for and enabling individuals, while also developing communal self-identity and greater powers of self-determination.⁶¹ Second, there is an effort to alter the community’s relationship to governing authorities, whether local, national, or global that involves understanding authorities as often complicit in oppression and, therefore, political change will require conflict and contestation over positions, resources, privileges, and other sources of power.⁶² Empowerment of the community is necessary to recognise the “silent and invisible violence” done to the community and made possible by the “quiet passage of unseen power”, which must be resisted by the community, as its own power is built.⁶³ A consummatory approach to global justice, then, needs to look at the quality of global social relationships and the injustices they produce, while understanding the pursuit of justice as more than the proffering of ideals and justifications for legitimate power. Justice demands resistance and change, meaning that justice theory should be concerned with the justification and efficiency of resistance as well as working imaginatively and experimentally to imagine not only new ideals but concrete tactics and practices to assist in the remaking of the world.⁶⁴

The limitations of space mean that further reflection on the events at Grenfell Tower are not possible. Instead, in the space left I want to suggest a promising way forward in rethinking global justice from a consummatory perspective. The architectonic approach, with its precision and impartiality, has an inherent harshness when human experience is measured

⁵⁸ Grenfell Speaks, *My Grenfell Year*.

⁵⁹ Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 5.

⁶⁰ redfish, *Failed By The State: The Struggle in the Shadow of Grenfell (Part 3)*, accessed September 4, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnBrvCTlayA>.

⁶¹ redfish, Grenfell Speaks, *My Grenfell Year*.

⁶² redfish, *Failed By The State: The Struggle in the Shadow of Grenfell (Part 2)*, accessed September 4, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxggXo-4UEU>.

⁶³ These phrases are from Lowkey in Grenfell Speaks, *My Grenfell Year*.

⁶⁴ A fuller account of the creative quality of political struggle can be found in Joe Hoover, “Performative Rights and Situationist Ethics,” *Contemporary Pragmatism* Forthcoming (n.d.).

against its exacting standards. A consummatory approach aspires to be a more humane approach, in which ideals of justice are not blueprints for an imagined world yet to come, but rather tools to be used in the struggle to overcome of injustice, engaging in the melioristic and necessary work of repairing relationships that harm us. Therefore, a consummatory approach focuses on the improvement of social relationships, transforming them from conflictual or harmful relations to those that are cooperative and positive.

There will be, however, many ways in which this broad approach can be specified and developed. Here, I want to draw on John Dewey's thinking on justice to outline and recommend the further development of a situationist global justice theory. First, a situationist theory involves not only a shift in focus from ideal orders to social relationships but also the privileging of the concrete and specific over the general and abstract. It is on this point that John Dewey's understanding of justice is melioristic and radical.⁶⁵ He begins with a scepticism of abstraction, affirming that the 'formula *summum jus summa injuria* expresses the outcome when abstract law is insisted upon without reference to the needs of concrete cases,'⁶⁶ but rather than try to find ways of mediating abstract and universal principles to concrete experience, Dewey abandons abstraction to affirm the primacy of the particular. He asserts that while general principles 'may have a certain suggestiveness in connection with specific situations...the conceptions are not proffered for what they may be worth in connection with special historic phenomena. They are general answers supposed to have a universal meaning that covers and dominates all particulars.'⁶⁷ In contrast to this, Dewey's approach provides the basis for a radically situationist global justice theory, in which justice aims at the remaking of our specific relationships, while also understanding our judgments about what justice demands as specific to concrete moments of injustice. Our judgments on what justice requires do not provide us with regulative principles at all, as 'every moral situation is a unique situation having its own irreplaceable good'.⁶⁸ Justice is the virtue of social relationships that empower and cultivate but it must constantly be remade in a dynamic social process of inquiry and practical action. For Dewey, this work is best done through a radically democratic culture, which is the product of practical action not the consequence of an abstract obligation.

Families, schools, local governments, the central government – all these must be reformed, but they must be reformed by the people who constitute them, working as individuals – in collaboration with other individuals, each accepting his own responsibility ... Social progress is neither an accident or a miracle; it is the sum of efforts made by individuals...⁶⁹

Thus, a situationist global justice theory entails a distinctive approach to understanding how and why our social relationships need to be reconstructed. In this work, the theorist's role is to contribute to an ongoing form of collective inquiry into real lived problems as an equal participant, which is a far less hierarchical and more democratic approach than conventional global justice theory. Further, the results of that collective inquiry are contingent as the process of pursuing justice is always incomplete and ongoing.

The second major difference of a situationist global justice theory is the attention to the nature of global injustice, which must be concrete and specific, informed by empirical inquiry. In part, this means that broad generalisations about failing states, deficient political cultures,

⁶⁵ Peter T. Manicas, "John Dewey and the Problem of Justice," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 15, no. 4 (1981): 286.

⁶⁶ John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909), 415–16. Emphasis in the original.

⁶⁷ John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 109.

⁶⁸ Dewey, 93.

⁶⁹ John Dewey, quoted in Manicas, "John Dewey and the Problem of Justice," 290.

or even a dysfunctional Westphalian international order are inadequate. A situationist justice theory requires a scepticism of any general theoretical concept used to explain injustice, as such concepts are merely tools of inquiry, which must prove their value. Further, the idealised political geography that leaves us stuck between the nation-state and some cosmopolitan authority-to-come should be abandoned as it serves only to blunt critical inquiry into contemporary globalised injustices. Giving up this political imaginary also entails letting go of the geography of injustice in which there are privileged spaces of justice and order, occupied with distinctly capable and rational people with duties to save unfortunate individuals living in deprived spaces of injustice and disorder.

Giving up the conventional framings of global justice is disorienting, as Fraser notes, but that disorientation should be felt as a call to inquiry rather than a kind of moral vertigo requiring new, if more mediated, grounding. While it is understandable that rethinking our framing of global justice from the concrete and particular introduces both the confusion that accompanies novelty and a complexity that arises out of multiplicity, if global justice theory seeks to contribute to the amelioration of pressing human problems, then it must find its footing in the mire. The prescription of greater specificity and concreteness, however, should not be taken as an appeal to naïve empiricism, as we can and should make use of general notions in a hypothetical and experimental way. While this is only an initial opening, there are a number of hypothetical concepts that we can use to orient a situationist global justice theory. First, contemporary injustice is increasingly the result of social processes and relationships of global scope, which are both transnational and trans-local. Second, these global injustices occur in a complex social geography of overlapping institutions, social interactions of increasing speed and quantity, and mobile individuals and communities—making an easy determination of spaces of justice versus injustice impossible. Additionally, this requires thinking of justice in terms of unintended consequences of social structures and processes, such that a moral imaginary focused on the evil of individual or institutional perpetrators of injustice is inadequate. Third, given the focus on injustices arising out of global social connections, a primary concern should be the persistence of domination and oppression in those relationships, especially as they attach to hierarchical social identities of global scope, such as race, gender, and class. Fourth, as a consequence of the persistence of domination and oppression, which creates exploitative and hierarchical relationships, inquiry into the nature and remedy of global injustice is best understood through engagement with the experiences of those suffering domination and oppression. This provides a situated standpoint for identifying pressing injustices while contributing to the democratic character of global justice theorising by undermining the theorist's power to frame the nature of injustice while encouraging more collaborative forms of inquiry. Fifth, and finally, a situationist global justice theory should address itself to remaking inequitable social relationships in a radical way, pursuing the empowerment of oppressed individuals and communities as a precondition of just relationships.

This is an all too brief sketch, but even in this outline form a situationist global justice theory radically alters how we approach injustice in the contemporary world. By starting with immediate concrete problems and seeking to remedy those through practical action informed by theoretical reflection, a situationist theory offers a consummatory approach that privileges the lived experiences of injustice. Injustices mark out fissures in the surface of our experience. Along with these ruptures comes a desire to understand the causes, to become more aware of the problem, to fix it, to remake the painful experience—all of this is present in the discourse of the groups working for justice in the wake of the Grenfell fire. That desire to remake our experience is what motivates the practical action of pursuing justice, which involves remaking the conditions of experience so that previous harms are overcome, such as when the Grenfell victims speak of repairing, rebuilding, and recreating communal relationships. Further, a

situationist global justice theory combines its focus on lived experience with a commitment to a radically democratic politics, in which the experience of injustice generates a political demand for those harmed by a dysfunctional social order to have a say in the relationships, processes, and institutions that affect them. A situationist global justice theory requires us to consider how the distribution of power and privilege leads to injustice, and how its redistribution is necessary to the pursuit of justice. Finally, by refusing the idealisations that structure conventional global justice theory it reconfigures the geography of justice in two vital ways. First, we are not dealing with static national community or a universal global polity, but rather the emergence of community within complex global social spaces. This means we have to understand global justice not as an extension of the architectonic order of the philosopher on to the globe but rather as opening up a critical inquiry into the justice of our global relationships—the social processes that link us in cause and effect, but also the political and communal ties that we develop in order to pursue justice. A situationist global justice theory understands our condition as global but the goal of justice remains the remaking of lived experience, which is important work to be done by, and in partnership with, those experiencing injustice. Thus, the role of the theorist is more modest, demanding greater humility and an understanding that our general reflections can assist inquiry but that we remain students of the world with much to learn about the pursuit of justice as a concrete and collective endeavour. Global justice theory is needed, and begins, in our cities and towns, in connecting our everyday experiences to our wider global condition, and in fighting against injustice for ourselves and in solidarity with others. A situationist global justice theory, by embracing a consummatory approach, aims not to order the world but rather to contribute in some small way to its improvement as we work to move “from that place of darkness to a place of light.”